

On the Reduction of the Sextant Observations of Distance  
of the Great Comet of 1843 from bright Stars. By the  
Rev. R. Main, one of the Secretaries of the Society.

Extract of a Letter from C. P. Smyth, Esq. to the Pre-  
sident, December 1845, accompanying some Drawings  
of the Great Comet of 1843.

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*List of Public Institutions and of Persons who have contributed  
to the Society's Library, &c. since the last Anniversary.*

Her Majesty's Government.  
Royal Society of London.  
L'Académie Royale des Sciences de l'Institut de France.  
Royal Geographical Society.  
Royal Agricultural Society.  
Geological Society.  
Society of Arts.  
Royal Academy of Munich.  
Royal Academy of Berlin.  
American Philosophical Society.  
United Service Institution.  
British Association.  
La Société de Physique, &c. de Genève.  
Royal Irish Academy.  
Royal Asiatic Society.  
Royal Society of Edinburgh.  
L'Administration Impériale des Mines de Russie.  
Italian Society.  
Bureau des Longitudes.  
Dépôt Général de la Marine de France.  
Royal Society of Göttingen.  
Zoological Society.  
Linnean Society.  
Imperial Academy of St. Petersburg.  
Royal Academy of Brussels.  
The Radcliffe Trustees.  
The Editor of the Athenæum Journal.  
The Registrar-General.

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The Duke of Northumberland.	H. H. Sherwood, Esq.
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Professor Quetelet.	R. Snow, Esq.
C. Rumker, Esq.	Lieut. W. S. Stratford.
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Professor Santini.	B. L. Vulliamy, Esq.
Professor Schumacher.	J. Wallace, Esq.

*The President (Capt. W. H. Smyth, R.N.) then addressed the Meeting on the subject of the award of the Medal, as follows :*

The Report, Gentlemen, which you have just heard, has acquainted you that your Council have awarded the Medal of this Society to Mr. Airy, the energetic Astronomer Royal, for his reductions of the Planetary Observations made at Greenwich between the years 1750 and 1830, by which an immense magazine of dormant facts, contained in the annals of the Royal Observatory, are rendered available to astronomical use. It may be proper, in expressing the grounds of this adjudication, to allude to the extensive nature and elevated character of that extraordinary work, as well as to the peculiar incidents connected with its production, which have brought it within the recognition of your Council.

It is, of course, understood, and has always been acted upon, that work, however excellent and useful, does not enter into competition when it only follows the necessary duty of the author. Our medal was primarily instituted as a mark of approbation on individual exertion, on labours of love; and not to note our sense of the official merits of public men, or of the rectitude and ability with which they may acquit themselves in their respective offices. Now the weighty reductions in question come before us as executed, at the expense of her Majesty's Government, by the Astronomer Royal. It remains, however, to be added, that the undertaking was proposed by that distinguished individual long before his appointment to Greenwich. After his attention had been particularly called to the planetary theory, by his taking charge of the Cambridge Observatory,—having already investigated the errors of the Solar Tables and the long inequality due to *Venus*,—he saw the immediate necessity of a complete computation of all the older *exact* observations, which is nearly equivalent to saying of those made at Greenwich since the erection of the new transit instrument by Bradley in September 1750, and no others. The importance of this object does not seem to have struck the authorities on Mr. Airy's first proposal; but after the British Association was formed, a deputation of that body waited upon the Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1833, and obtained his consent to defray the necessary expenses. Mr. Airy's offer was, that if the Government